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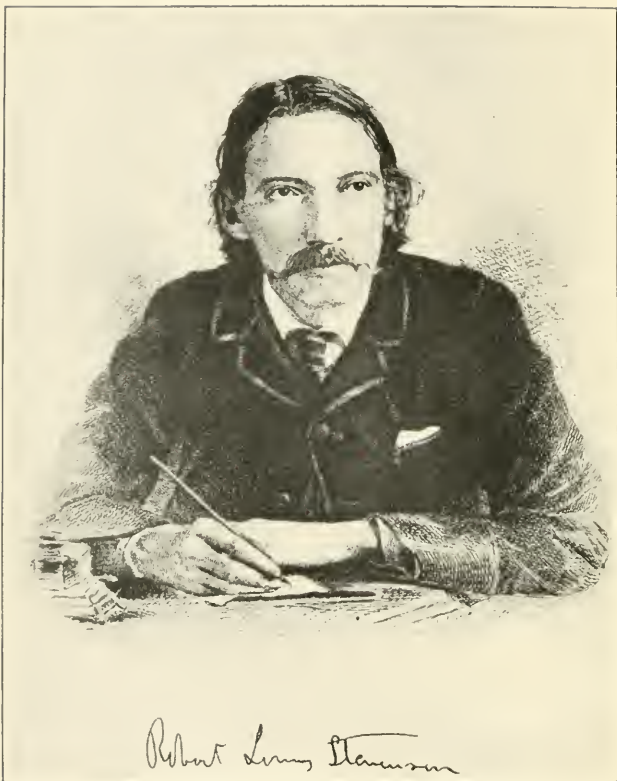
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Stevensoniana

*BEING A REPRINT OF
VARIOUS LITERARY AND
PICTORIAL MISCELLANY
ASSOCIATED WITH
Robert Louis Stevenson
THE MAN AND HIS WORK*



The Bankside Press

M. F. MANSFIELD, 14 WEST 22ND STREET, NEW YORK

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Stevensoniana

By Way of Introduction

I

The early days of the literary career of Robert Louis Stevenson can hardly be said to have been entirely devoid of recognition, though it would appear doubtful if the world at large was willing to recognize his abilities had it not been for his wonderful personality; with a soul and an imagination far above those of his early associates he gradually drew around him the respect and admiration of that larger world of letters, the London coterie. The following biographical notes are to be considered then as a mere resumé of the various chronological periods and stages of his career as is shown by the many facts which have already become the common property of the latter day reader, but which by reason of the scattered source of supply and the extreme unlikelihood of their being included in any authorative life or biography, makes them at once interesting and valuable.

As sponsor for the abilities of Robert Louis Stevenson, stands first and foremost, the name of William Ernest Henley a belief which was latterly endorsed by most literary critics from Gladstone to LeGallienne.

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson was born in Howard Place, Edinburgh, on the 13th of November, 1850. From his eighteenth year he seldom, if ever, signed himself aught but Robert Louis Stevenson, omitting the name Balfour therefrom. From birth he was of a slight and excitable nature and suffered keenly from chronic and frequent illness. His recognized literary labors may be said to have commenced at the immature age of six when, it is recalled, he wrote, presumably for his own amusement and that of his immediate family, "A History of Moses," and some years later an account of his "Travels in Perth."

In these early years there also took shape and form in his imagination what was afterwards given forth to the world in the pages of "Treasure Island."

At eight, Stevenson was at school, and at eleven entered the Academy of his native city. Here he began his first real literary labors, publishing, editing and even writing and illustrating the contents of a small school periodical.

Stevenson was emphatically a bird of passage, for regardless of the ties of kindred and sentiment he was ever on the wing, and when in after years as a seeker after health he proved none the less a careful observer than he had been in his schoolboy days, small wonder it is that he was able to give to the reading world such charming and novel descriptions of things seen.

In his schooldays he journeyed far into the country round about, the inevitable outcome of which was for him to ultimately to write out in his own picturesque and imaginative words a record of his observations. From "Random Memories" we learn of his pleasure at having taken a journey in company with his father around among the lighthouses of the Scottish coast, "*the first in the complete character of a man, without the help of petticoats.*" And with these excursions into Fife began his wanderings so charmingly and characteristically chronicled in his later letters and reminiscences.

In 1862 he went abroad to Germany and Holland, and in the next year and in that following to Italy and

the Riviera. In 1865 he wintered at Torquay, an English winter resort on the south coast.

At seventeen, at Edinburgh University, Stevenson became a pupil of Fleeming Jenkin, Professor of Engineering, whose biography he wrote with much pride and devotion some years later.

Thus it is seen from early childhood that Stevenson was constantly putting forth the product of his pen, in Verses, Essays, Plays, Parodies, and Tales. In the "Stevenson Medley," a privately issued volume published as a sort of supplement to the "Edinburgh Edition" of his writings are to be found reprints of various of his early efforts, including the famous pamphlet "The Pentland Rising," which, in its original form, is now considered as being perhaps the rarest of all "Stevensoniana."

Quoting from a letter of Stevenson's to a friend, he says: "*I owned that I cared for nothing but literature; my father saying that that was no profession but that I might be called to the Bar, if I chose* * * * *

so at the age of twenty-one I began to study law." Accordingly the next few years were spent with arduous reading of Blackstone and his contemporaries, and arriving at the age of twenty-five, in 1875, Stevenson passed the examinations and was formally called a few days thereafter. During his matriculation at the law schools Stevenson was all the while perfecting himself in the profession of his heart's choice.

About this time he came to know Mr. Sidney Colvin and Mr. William Ernest Henley, the beginning as the world knows, of a life long friendship with both these gentlemen.

Stevenson's first introduction to the reading world at large was on the occasion of an article which appeared in the *Portfolio* for December, 1873, with the signature L. S. Stoneven appended.

Already Stevenson had begun to reap the benefit of acquaintanceship and association with the little coterie of literary folk whom he had fallen in with in London. For a time he sojourned in the artistic

colony which had taken up its abode in the Forest of Fontainebleau, and has recorded its charms of life and association in the essay "Fontainebleau." He also came to know Bohemian Paris as well, and in certain circles which there exist, or did at one time exist, the memory of M. Stevenson still fondly lingers. Returning to Edinburgh Stevenson hung forth his placard at the now famous 17 Heriot Row, which read Robert Louis Stevenson, Advocate. He did not, however, hang for long between the balance of Law and Literature, and it has been said, he never tried a case. Finally it was but apparent that he was so firmly wedded to literature that, needs must, he should devote himself to it and with the publication of "*Virginibus Puerisque*," he is truly said to have emerged from the threatening obscurity of his early struggles.

"*An Inland Voyage*" has recorded Stevenson's travels in Belgium in 1876, and "*Travels with a Donkey in The Cevennes*," chronicles another wandering in search of the picturesque, undertaken at

about the same time. It is doubtful if either volume proved financially profitable at first though they proved, in connection with the volume of essays before mentioned, the means of introducing the name and work of Robert Louis Stevenson to an ever widening circle of fame.

During this period Stevenson was a frequent contributor to the London literary journals, and he had also rewritten an early production in the form of a play; this in collaboration with Mr. W. E. Henley, and had also contributed his notes on "Picturesque Edinburgh" to Hamerton's *Portfolio*.

In 1879 Stevenson set sail for the new world taking ship as a mere emigrant, crossing the ocean as a steerage passenger and afterwards by emigrant train, across the American continent to the Golden Gate; a rude but romantic method of travel for one who had been nurtured in comfort and a chronic sufferer from ill health; a long journey though destined to be but the beginnings of a wandering after peace and health which

latterly brought him to "Vailima" by the shore of that "ultimate island where now rest the remains of the beloved "Tusitala."

The "Amateur Emigrant" did not at once meet with the success it deserved in the American literary arena, though no one will deny but that praise was afterward showered upon the author's work to the full. Eight months were spent in the immediate vicinity of the Golden Gate when he succumbed to a severe illness which proved a serious draft on his powers.

May In 1880, Stevenson, then in his thirty-first year, was married to Mrs. Osbourne, an American lady whom he had known in France, and with his step-son Lloyd Osbourne and Mrs. Stevenson took up his abode in an abandoned mining camp at Juan Silverado, situated in the mountains of the Coast range. The life here can be no more pleasantly referred to than by recalling the record which was given to the public in "Silverado Squatters." The family remained at Silverado through the summer from whence they

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all journeyed to the old home in North Britain. For his health's sake, Stevenson, accompanied by his household, then betook himself to the dry and invigorating atmosphere of Davos Platz in the high Alps; and here amid the sunshine and the clear air the family settled for a winter's stay; and here it was that Stevenson, in conjunction with his step-son, concocted those ingenious and unique booklets known to collectors as the "Davos Platz Brochures." They had set up a small press and derived much pleasure in designing and printing these little books; "Black Canyon," "Not I," and "Moral Emblems," all of which are now of such extreme rarity as to be almost unobtainable in their original state.

In 1881 was begun the actual labor of writing "Treasure Island," the germ of which had been lying dormant in Stevenson's brain since his early schoolboy days. After another visit to Scotland, Stevenson set his footsteps still further to the south-

ward and domiciled himself with his family at the Chalet la Solitude, near Hyeres near Marseilles, on the shores of the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, "Treasure Island" was running its course serially in the *Young Folks Paper*, and when it appeared as a volume pointed the definite way of Stevenson's popularity, the book being in every sense his first popular success.

Realizing that his malady grew no better in the southland Stevenson settled at Bournemouth, a mild winter resort on the south coast of England. Here he occupied the house presented to him by his father, and which he named "Skerryvore" after the light-house off the coast of Scotland, designed and built by his uncle, Alan Stevenson. Stevenson continued his literary labours at this place unremittingly, though never at any one extended period was he really free from the dread grasp of his malady. Up to now writing had brought him but scant profit, and until his thirty-sixth year, says Mr. Colvin, his income had

scarcely, if ever, exceeded three hundred pounds per year. His second great success was that weird tale of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and thenceforth he came to know his value as a writer of ability, and felt definitely assured that his labors would return to him a satisfying income.

In 1887, after the death of his father, Stevenson again went to America, sailing for New York in August of that year, and sojourning for short periods among and with friends in the East.

In the spring of 1888, when in his thirty-eighth year, Stevenson accompanied by members of his family, accepted an offer to cruise among the islands of the South Seas and write the story of his voyagings in a series of letters to a syndicate of newspapers. Arrangements were made for the charter of the schooner *Casco*, Captain Otis, in which he set sail from San Francisco, early in the spring, bound ostensibly for the "Marquesas." The cruise covered six months. During the voyage northward the Steven-

sons stayed some months at Honolulu and while there a visit was paid to the leper settlement on the island of Molokai, which ultimately called forth the "open letter" to the Rev. Dr. Hyde of Honolulu, wherein that Reverend gentleman received an unmitigated scathing from Stevenson's incensed pen, an incident which is only too readily recalled for one to linger over it at this time.

From Honolulu the cruise was continued southward for another six months on a trading schooner called the *Equator* which arrived at Apia, in Samoa, about Christmas time (1889). Here the company remained for some weeks, and here Stevenson purchased an estate of some hundreds of acres, lying on the mountainside overlooking the sea, which he called *Vailima*. The Stevensons went to Sidney, N. S. W. soon after, but again in the month of April steamed away in the trading steamer *Janet Nicoll*, visiting Auckland and the Penrhyn Islands, thence to the Ellis, Gilbert, and Marshall Islands and via New

Caledonia, Sydney, and Auckland to Apia where they arrived again in the early autumn. They settled here upon their estate and the following spring Mrs. Stevenson, the elder, joined the household, as also Stevenson's step-daughter, Mrs. Strong; thus began the four remaining years of Stevenson's life, amid the ties of kith and kin surrounding him as he worked in his exile in a far away land.

Amid these pleasant surroundings Stevenson pursued his constant and daily work, and rode about his island home entertaining the population, both native and European. He became actively interested in the political life of the islands, and when international complications came upon them in 1891, he dignified the whole proceedings by his impartial letters to the *London Times*, and later by the publication of the "Footnote to History," a monograph published in 1892.

Meanwhile he was applying himself to his writing with arduous persistancy, and quoting his own words

from a letter written in 1893, he was seriously overworked, "*I am overworked bitterly, and my hand is a thing that was, and in the meanwhile so are my brains.*"

In January of the same year he suffered from an attack of influenza from which he never fully recovered. While yet ill in bed he had begun to dictate "St. Ives" and "Weir of Hermiston."

From the Dictionary of National Biography is taken the following description of the sad end. "On the afternoon of the Fourth of December he was talking gaily with his wife, when a sudden rupture of a blood-vessel in the brain laid him at her feet and within two hours all was over."

* * * * *

Out across the pearly Pacific on the lonely mountainside at Samoa, lies all that once was mortal of "*Tusitala, the Teller of Tales.*"

APPARITION.

*“ Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,
Neat-footed and weak-fingered: in his face—
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched with race.
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity—
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace
Of passion and impudence and energy.*

*Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist:
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.”*

(W. E. HENLEY)



FRONTISPIECE, BY WALTER CRANE, TO "AN INLAND VOYAGE."
(FIRST EDITION.)



FRONTISPIECE, BY WALTER CRANE, TO "TRAVELS WITH A
DONKEY." (FIRST EDITION.)

STEVENSON'S FIRST BOOK

The publication of the Stevenson letters revived interest in his career, both as man and writer. His first published book, as our readers will remember, was "The Pentland Rising," a pamphlet of twenty pages issued in Edinburgh in the autumn of 1866, when the author was but sixteen. At the time of Stevenson's death copies of this little work were sold for upwards of £20 a piece, but the price afterwards fell considerably. In 1868, he wrote the "Charity Bazaar," a boyish skit, filling four pages quarto, and which was privately printed. His next appearance in print seems to have been in the pages of a college paper, the *Edinburgh University Magazine*, which he and three fellow-students edited, and which lived through four numbers only. These numbers were issued from January to April, 1871. He says:

"A pair of little active brothers—Livingstone by name, great skippers on the foot, great rubbers of the hands, who kept a bookshop over against the Uni-

versity building—had been debauched to play the part of publishers.”

The first number was edited by all four associates, the second by Stevenson and James Walter Ferrier, the third by Stevenson alone, and of the last he says: “It has long been a solemn question who it was that edited the fourth,” and then: “It would perhaps be still more difficult to say who read it. Poor yellow sheet, that looked so hopefully in the Livingstones’ window! Poor, harmless paper, that might have gone to print a Shakespeare on, and was instead so clumsily defaced with nonsense! And, shall I say, Poor editors? I cannot pity myself, to whom it was all pure gain. It was no news to me, but only the wholesome confirmation of my judgment, when the magazine struggled into half-birth, and instantly sickened and subsided into night.”

Stevenson contributed six articles to the four numbers, one of which “An Old Scotch Gardener,” he revised and reprinted in “Memories and Portraits.”

It will be news to many people that Stevenson was awarded the silver of the Royal Scottish Society of Arts for a paper entitled "A Notice of a New Form of Intermittent Light for Lighthouses." This paper was printed separately from the Transactions of the Society in a thin pamphlet, consisting of five pages of text only, beside the title-leaf. It has the headlines, "Mr. R. L. Stevenson on a New Form of Intermittent Light for Lighthouses," and contains five illustrations in the text.—*Publishers' Circular*.

BOOKS WHICH HAVE INFLUENCED ME

By R. L. S. •

The Editor has somewhat insidiously laid a trap for his correspondents, the question put appearing at first so innocent, truly cutting so deep. It is not, indeed, until after some reconnaissance and review that the writer awakes to find himself engaged upon something in the nature of autobiography, or, perhaps worse,

upon a chapter in the life of that little, beautiful brother whom we once all had, and whom we have all lost and mourned, the man we ought to have been, the man we hoped to be. But when word has been passed (even to an editor), it should, if possible, be kept; and if sometimes I am wise and say too little, and sometimes weak and say too much, the blame must lie at the door of the person who entrapped me.

The most influential books, and the truest in their influence, are works of fiction. They do not pin the reader to a dogma, which he must afterwards discover to be inexact; they do not teach him a lesson, which he must afterwards unlearn. They repeat, they rearrange, they clarify the lesson of life; they disengage us from ourselves, they constrain us to the acquaintance of others; and they show us the web of experience, but with a singular change—that monstrous, consuming *ego* of ours being, for the nonce, struck out. To be so, they must be reasonably true to the human comedy; and any work that is so serves the

turn of instruction. But the course of our education is answered best by those poems and romances where we breathe a magnanimous atmosphere of thought and meet generous and pious characters. Shakespeare has served me best. Few living friends have had upon me an influence so strong for good as Hamlet or Rosalind. The last character, already well beloved in the reading, I had the good fortune to see, I must think, in an impressionable hour, played by Mrs. Scott Siddons. Nothing has ever more moved, more delighted, more refreshed me; nor has the influence quite passed away. The dying Lear had a great effect upon my mind, and was the burthen of my reflections for long, so profoundly, so touchingly generous did it appear in sense so overpowering in expression. Perhaps my dearest and best friend outside of Shakespeare is D'Artagnan—the elderly D'Artagnan of the “*Vicomte de Bragelonne*.” I know not a more human soul, nor, in his way, a finer; I shall be very sorry for the man who is so much of a pedant in

morals that he cannot learn from the Captain of Musketeers. Lastly, I must name the "Pilgrim's Progress," a book that breathes of every beautiful and valuable emotion.

But of works of art little can be said; their influence is profound and silent, like the influence of nature; they mould by contact; we drink them up like water, and are bettered, yet know how. It is in books more specifically didactic that we can follow out the effect, and distinguish and weigh and compare. A book which has been very influential upon me fell early into my hands, and so may stand first, though I think its influence was only sensible later on, and perhaps still keeps growing, for it is a book not easily outlived; the "Essais" of Montaigne. That temperate and general picture of life is a great gift to place in the hands of persons of to-day; they will find in these smiling pages a magazine of heroism and wisdom, all of an antique strain; they will have their "linen decencies" and excited orthodoxies fluttered,

and will (if they have any gift of reading) perceive that these have not been fluttered without some excuse and ground of reason ; and (again if they have any gift of reading) they will end by seeing that this old gentleman was in a dozen ways a finer fellow, and held in a dozen ways a nobler view of life, than they or their contemporaries.

The next book, in order of time, to influence me, was the New Testament, and in particular the Gospel according to St. Matthew. I believe it would startle and move any one if they could make a certain effort of imagination and read it freshly like a book, not droningly and dully like a portion of the Bible. Any one would then be able to see in it those truths which we are all courteously supposed to know and all modestly refrain from applying. But upon this subject it is perhaps better to be silent.

I come next to Whitman's "*Leaves of Grass*," a book of singular service, a book which tumbled the world upside down for me, blew into space a thousand

cobwebs of genteel and ethical illusion, and, having thus shaken my tabernacle of lies, set me back again upon a strong foundation of all the original and manly virtues. But it is, once more, only a book for those who have the gift of reading. I will be very frank—I believe it is so with all good books, except, perhaps, fiction. The average man lives, and must live, so wholly in convention, that gunpowder charges of the truth are more apt to discompose than to invigorate his creed. Either he cries out upon blasphemy and indecency, and crouches the closer round that little idol of part-truths and part-conveniences which is the contemporary deity, or he is convinced by what is new, forgets what is old, and becomes truly blasphemous and indecent himself. New truth is only useful to supplement the old; rough truth is only wanted to expand, not to destroy, our civil and often elegant conventions. He who cannot judge had better stick to fiction and the daily papers. There he will get little harm, and, in the first at least, some good.

Close upon the back of my discovery of Whitman, I came under the influence of Herbert Spencer. No more persuasive rabbi exists, and few better. How much of his vast structure will bear the touch of time, how much is clay and how much brass, it were too curious to inquire. But his words, if dry, are always manly and honest; there dwells in his pages a spirit of highly abstract joy, plucked naked like an algebraic symbol, but still joyful; and the reader will find there a *caput-mortuum* of piety, with little indeed of its loveliness, but with most of its essentials; and these two qualities make his a wholesome, as his intellectual vigour makes him a bracing, writer. I should be much of a hound if I lost my gratitude to Herbert Spencer.

“Goethe’s Life,” by Lewes, had a great importance for me when it first fell into my hands—a strange instance of the partiality of man’s good and man’s evil. I know no one whom I less admire than Goethe; he seems a very epitome of the sins of genius,

breaking open the doors of private life, and wantonly wounding friends, in that crowning offence of "Werther," and in his own character a mere pen-and-ink Napoleon, conscious of the rights and duties of superior talents as a Spanish inquisitor was conscious of the rights and duties of his office. And yet in his fine devotion to his art, in his honest and serviceable friendship for Schiller, what lessons are contained! Biography, usually so false to its office, does here for once perform for us some of the work of fiction, reminding us, that is, of the truly mingled tissue of man's nature, and how huge faults and shining virtues cohabit and persevere in the same character. History serves us well to this effect, but in the originals, not in the pages of the popular epitomiser, who is bound, by the very nature of his task, to make us feel the difference of epochs instead of the essential identity of man, and even in the originals only to those who can recognize their own human virtues and defects in strange forms, often inverted and under

strange names, often interchanged. Martial is a poet of no good repute, and it gives a man new thoughts to read his works dispassionately, and find in this unseemly jester's serious passages the image of a kind, wise, and self-respecting gentleman. It is customary, I suppose, in reading Martial, to leave out these pleasant verses; I never heard of them, at least, until I found them for myself; and this partiality is one among a thousand things that help to build up our distorted and hysterical conception of the great Roman empire.

This brings us by a natural transition to a very noble book—the “*Meditations*” of Marcus Aurelius. The dispassionate gravity, the noble forgetfulness of self, the tenderness of others, that are there expressed and were practised on so great a scale in the life of its writer, make this book; a book quite by itself. No one can read it and not be moved. Yet it scarcely or rarely appeals to the feeling—those very mobile, those not very trusty parts of man. Its

address lies farther back : its lesson comes more deeply home ; when you have read, you carry away with you a memory of the man himself ; it is as though you had touched a royal hand, looked into brave eyes, and made a noble friend ; there is another bond on you thenceforth, binding you to life and to the love of virtue.

Wordsworth should perhaps come next. Every one has been influenced by Wordsworth, and it is hard to tell precisely how. A certain innocence, a rugged austerity of joy, a sight of the stars, "the silence that there is among the hills," something of the cold thrill of dawn, cling to his work and give it a particular address to what is best in us. I do not know that you learn a lesson ; you need not—Mill did not—agree with any one of his beliefs ; and yet the spell is cast. Such are the best teachers : a dogma learned is only a new error—the old one was perhaps as good ; but a spirit communicated is a perpetual possession. These best teachers climb beyond teach-

ing to the plane of art ; it is themselves, and what is best in themselves, that they communicate.

I should never forgive myself if I forgot "*The Egoist*." It is art, if you like, but it belongs purely to didactic art, and from all the novels I have read (and I have read thousands) stands in a place by itself. Here is a Nathan for the modern David. * * * "*The Egoist*" is a satire ; so much must be allowed ; but it is a satire of a singular quality, which tells you nothing of that obvious mote which is engaged from first to last with that invisible beam. It is yourself that is haunted down ; these are your own faults that are dragged into the day and numbered, with lingering relish, with cruel cunning and precision. A young friend of Mr. Meredith's (as I have the story) came to him in an agony. "This is too bad of you," he cried. "Willoughby is me !" "No, my dear fellow," said the author, "he is all of us." I have read "*The Egoist*" five or six times myself, and I mean to read it again ; for I am like the young

friend of the anecdote—I think Willoughby an unmanly but a very serviceable exposure of myself.

I suppose, when I am done, I shall find that I have forgotten much that was most influential, as I see already I have forgotten Thoreau, and Hazlitt, whose paper “On the Spirit of Obligations” was a turning point in my life, and Penn, whose little book of aphorisms had a brief but strong effect on me, and Mitford’s “Tales of Old Japan,” wherein I learned for the first time the proper attitude of any rational man to his country’s laws—a secret found, and kept, in the Asiatic Islands. That I should commemorate all is more than I can hope, or the editor could ask. It will be more to the point, after have said so much upon improving books, to say a word or two about the improvable reader. The gift of reading, as I have called it, is not very common, nor very generally understood. It consists, first of all, in a vast intellectual endowment—a free grace, I find I must call it—by which a man rises to

understand that he is not punctually right, nor those from whom he differs absolutely wrong. He may hold dogmas; he may hold them passionately; and he may know that others hold them but coldly, or hold them differently, or hold them not at all. Well, if he has the gift of reading, these others will be full of meat for him. They will see the other side of propositions and the other side of virtues. He need not change his dogma for that, but he may change his reading of that dogma, and he must supplement and correct his deductions from it. A human truth, which is always very much a lie, hides as much of life as it displays. It is men who hold another truth, or, as it seems to us, perhaps, a dangerous lie, who can extend our restricted field of knowledge, and rouse our drowsy consciences. Something that seems quite new, or that seems insolently false or very dangerous, is the test of a reader. If he tries to see what it means, what truth excuses it, he has the gift, and let him read. If he is merely hurt, or offended, or exclaims upon his author's

folly, he had better take to the daily papers ; he will never be a reader.

And here, with the aptest illustrative force, after I have laid down my part-truth, I must step in with its opposite. For, after all, we are vessels of a very limited content. Not all men can read all books ; it is only in a chosen few that any man will find his appointed food ; and the fittest lessons are the most palatable, and make themselves welcome to the mind. A writer learns this early, and it is his chief support ; he goes on unafraid, laying down the law ; and he is sure at heart that most of what he says is demonstrably false, and much of a mingled strain, and some hurtful, and very little good for service ; but he is sure besides that when his words fall into the hands of any genuine reader, they will be weighed and winnowed, and only that which suits will be assimilated ; and when they fall into the hands of one who cannot intelligently read, they come there quite silent and inarticulate, falling upon deaf ears, and his secret is kept as if he had not written.

A STEVENSON LETTER

Dear Madam :—It is impossible to be more gracefully penitent : I give you leave to buy ——'s triple piracy in the —— library ; and this permission is withheld from all other living creatures, so that you alone will possess that publication without sin.

I am, dear madam,

Yours truly,

March, 1887.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

A JUSTIFICATION

Boston, June 5, 1900.—When Mr. Stevenson was at Saranac in the Adirondacks I sent him a short editorial on his Brownies that I had written for the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, and also a letter, saying that I owed him one dollar. I professed penitence for having bought a pirated copy of “Dr. Jekyll” for 25 cents, and promised to make good the deficit if I ever met him. He sent me the letter above.

In May, eleven years later, Miss Louise Imogene Guiney invited me to meet her friend, Mrs. Virgil Williams, to be told—for print—the true story of the Stevenson marriage. I was unable to go to meet Mrs. Williams at the time appointed, but a day or two later she came by Miss Guiney's introduction to an editorial desk where I had been for eight years in the office of the Boston *Evening Transcript*, and gave me certain facts, from which the article below was written. It appeared in *The Transcript*, May 18, 1898.

MINNA CAROLINE SMITH.

MRS. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson, who has been ill in New York, has recovered and has gone to England for an indefinite stay. It is, however, her purpose to make her home again ultimately in San Francisco. Her presence in England is necessary, as Mr. Sidney Colvin is now engaged in writing the "Life of Stevenson," and depends upon Mrs. Stevenson

for aid in compilation, and in deciding what shall be said and what shall be left out. A great deal has been said about the Stevensons which might much better have been left unsaid, for the simple reason that it is not true. Like the old story of Phillips Brooks and the boy with the "Episcopalian Kittens," some of the truthless tales are harmless. Others are less innocuous than the imaginative yarns which are always likely to be current about any bright personality, any "shining mark," like Stevenson and his accomplished wife.

Now that he is dead, and Mrs. Stevenson has gone to his native Britain, it is well to deny authoritatively the absurd story which has often been revived during the past twenty years that Mrs. Stevenson's first husband, Mr. Osbourne, gave her away in marriage on the day of her wedding to Robert Louis Stevenson, and that Stevenson afterwards fraternized with his predecessor. As a matter of fact, Stevenson never in his life even saw the father of Lloyd Osbourne, who was

about fourteen years of age at the time of his mother's marriage to the famous Scot. The father of Stevenson, an old-time Presbyterian gentleman, made Lloyd Osbourne his heir, thus wholly welcoming his beloved daughter-in-law in the family, where she and her children have found happiness and where they gave so much. It is advisedly said that the elder Stevenson made Lloyd Osbourne his heir, his property to be that of his son's step-child after the death of his son and that son's wife. It is well known that Stevenson's mother was with his family in Samoa, and this dignified and conservative lady also followed the custom of the country which the family followed, in homely phrase, "going bare-footed" at home. Pictures of Stevenson in his Samoa home, enjoying the freedom of this native fashion, have been common enough. This Samoan custom seemed simple and natural to any one who saw the Stevensons in Samoa going without shoes and stockings, quite as summer girls on the Massachusetts shore have gone about without gloves or hats

during recent years, an unconventionality which would once have shocked thousands. The matter would not be worth mentioning, but a curious myth about Mrs. Stevenson has sprung from it. A paragraph has been floating through contemporaries in several cities of late, to the effect that Mrs. Stevenson went out to dine in London, when first introduced there by her husband, without shoes and stockings! This little yarn really denies itself on the face of it. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Stevenson's conformity to social customs has never been found insufficient wherever she has been. She is a woman of original talents and great adaptability of talent who, for many years, was the nurse, the "guide, philosopher and friend," as well as the beloved wife of the child of genius whose name she bears. She was studying art in Paris, where she had gone with her three children, when she first met Robert Louis Stevenson, who was among the artists and literary folk at Barbizon. She returned to America with her daughter and her son—one son had

died while she was in France—and readily got a divorce from Mr. Osbourne. No word concerning the father of her children has ever been uttered for publication by Mrs. Stevenson, or ever will be. He married a second time and, after a while, left his wife and disappeared. He has since been seen in South Africa. It is here repeated that Robert Louis Stevenson never saw him. Mrs. Stevenson wished to delay her second marriage for a year, but Stevenson had travelled over land and sea to California, and was ill and homesick. So, by the advice of a close friend, the marriage was not long postponed. This friend was Mrs. Virgil Williams, wife of the well-known teacher of painting in San Francisco, the founder of that pioneer art school of the West, which, since Mr. Williams's death, was munificently endowed by Mr. Searles as the Hopkins Institute. Mrs. Williams went with the pair to the house of Dr. Scott, a Presbyterian minister of San Francisco, who married Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson. Nobody else was present at the

private wedding, except Mrs. Scott, the wife of the minister. This divine made Stevenson a present of a religious book of his own writing to read on the journey to Scotland, and the whimsical fear of Stevenson that he might not read it all while crossing the continent and the Atlantic was characteristic. But if he felt that this was not sufficiently light reading for a steamer journey he appreciated the gift, and in return sent Dr. Scott a book on a like topic written by his father in Scotland.

“People are very much like folks”; the fairy tales which are told about the famous are very likely to need large grains of salt in the taking. The simple truth about the Stevensons was that theirs was a peculiarly fortunate and happy marriage, and that if they lived in Bohemia it was “on the airy uplands” of that land, where freedom of personal action never meant wilful foolish eccentricity or lack of conformity to the canons of true courtesy and kindness.

THE DAVOS PLATZ BOOKS

Mr. Joseph Pennell has contributed to *The Studio* an account of an unpublished chapter, which is delightful reading and reveals Stevenson to the world as an illustrator and wood engraver. With the people of Le Monastier, the lace-makers, Stevenson became a popular figure and was known for miles in the country. In the town every urchin seemed to know his name, "although no living creature could pronounce it." One group of lace-makers brought out a chair whenever he went by, and insisted on having a good gossip. They would have it that the English talked French, or patois, and "of all patois they declared that mine was the most preposterous and the most jocose in sound. At each new word there was a new explosion of laughter, and some of the younger ones were glad to rise from their chairs and stamp about the streets in ecstasy." In a notice of the article, a writer in *The London Chronicle* says:

"There was a dear old lady of Monastier with

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whom he struck up an attachment. She passed judgment on his sketches and his heresy with a wry mouth and a twinkle of the eye that were eminently Scottish. 'She was never weary of sitting to me for her portrait, in her best cap and brigand hat, and with all her wrinkles tidily composed, and though she never failed to repudiate the result, she would always insist upon another trial. * * * "No, no," she would say, "that is not it. I am old, to be sure, but I am better looking than that. We must try again."'

"But the most characteristic work of Stevenson as illustrator is to be found in the quaint little woodcuts which adorned the volumes turned out by the press of Osbourne & Co. at Davos. With some very primitive type and a boundless capacity for frivolling, this 'company,' consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson and young Lloyd Osbourne, managed to while away the hours of the Swiss Winter in delightful fashion. As Mr. Pennell states in *The Studio* these Davos editions are exceedingly hard to secure. The

British Museum itself has only two copies, and there is no hint of their existence in any of the published works. One of these works was entitled ‘Moral Emblems ; a Collection of Cuts and Verses.’

“There was also a second collection of ‘Moral Emblems, an edition de luxe, in tall paper, extra fine, price tenpence, and a popular edition for the million, small paper, cuts slightly worn, a great bargain, eightpence.’ Another of these volumes was entitled ‘The Graver and the Pen,’ of which the author asserted on the poster that it was ‘a most strikingly illustrated little work, and the poetry so pleasing that when it is taken up to be read is finished before it is set down.’ There were five full-page illustrations, eleven pages of poetry finely printed on superb paper, and the whole work offered a splendid chance for an energetic publisher. One of the moral emblems runs as follows :

“Industrious pirate ! See him sweep
The lonely bosom of the deep,

And daily the horizon scan
From Hatteras or Matapan.
Be sure, before that pirate's old,
He will have made a pot of gold,
And will retire from all his labors
And be respected by his neighbors.
You also scan your life's horizon
For all that you can clap your eyes on.

“ Sometimes an unintentional effect was introduced into the woodcuts, as in the case of ‘ The Foolhardy Geographer.’ We cannot tell the story, but the effect is thus described in a postscript :

“ A blemish in the cut appears,
Alas ! it cost both blood and tears.
The glancing graver swerved aside,
Fast flowed the artist's vital tide !
And now the apologetic bard
Demands indulgence for his pard.”

STEVENSON'S LATER LETTERS

London Bookman, Dec. 1899.

Out of these noble volumes of Stevenson letters two things come to me of new, of which the first is the more important. Before and above all else these books (with their appendage, the Vailima Correspondence) are the record of as noble a friendship as I know of in letters. And perhaps, as following from this, we have here a Stevenson without shadows. Not even a full statue, but rather a medallion in low relief—as it were the St. Gaudens bust done into printer's ink.

It is difficult to say precisely what one feels, with Mr. Colvin (and long may he be spared) still in the midst of us. And yet I cannot help putting it on record that what impresses me most in these volumes, wherein are so many things lovely and of good report, is the way in which, in order that one friend may shine like a city set on a hill, the other friend consistently retires himself into deepest shade. Yet all the same

Mr. Colvin is ever on the spot. You can trace him on every page—emergent only when an explanation must be made, never saying a word too much, obviously in possession of all the facts, but desirous of no reward or fame or glory to himself if only Tusitala continue to shine the first among his peers. Truly there is a love not perhaps *surpassing* the love of women, but certainly *passing* it, in that it is different in kind and degree.

Obviously, however, Mr. Colvin often wounded with the faithful wounds of a friend, and sometimes in return he was blessed, and sometimes he was banned. But always the next letter made it all right.

To those outside of his family and familiars Stevenson was always a charming and sometimes a regular correspondent. To myself, with no claim upon him save that of a certain instinctive mutual liking, he wrote with the utmost punctuality every two months from 1888 to the week of his death.

It is the irony of fate that about thirty of these let-

ters lie buried somewhere beneath, above, or behind an impenetrable barrier of 25,000 books. In a certain great "fitting" conducted by village workmen these manuscripts disappeared, and have so far eluded all research. But at the next upturning of the Universe, I doubt not they will come to light and be available for Mr. Colvin's twentieth edition. It was a great grief to me that I had no more to contribute besides those few but precious documents which appear in their places in the second volume of "Letters to Family and Friends."

Albeit, in spite of every such blank, here is such richness as has not been in any man's correspondence since Horace Walpole's—yet never, like his, acidly-based, never razor-edged, never, for all Stevenson's Edinburgh extraction, either west-endy or east-windy. Here in brief are two books, solid, sane, packed with wit and kindliness and filled full of the very height of living.

Not all of Stevenson is here—it seems to me, not even the greater part of Stevenson. Considered from one point of view, there is more of the depths of the

real Stevenson in a single chapter of Miss Eve Simpson's "Edinburgh Days," especially in the chapter entitled "Life at Twenty-five," than in any of these 750 fair pages. But with such a friend as Mr. Colvin this was inevitable. He has carried out that finest of the maxims of amity, "Censure your friend in private, praise him in public!" And, indeed, if ever man deserved to be praised it was Stevenson. So generous was he, so ready to be pleased with other men's matters, so hard to satisfy with his own, a child among children, a man among men, a king among princes. Yet, all the same, anything of the nature of a play stirred him to the shoe soles, down to that last tragic bowl of salad and bottle of old Burgundy on the night before he died. He was a fairy prince and a peasant boy in one, Aladdin with an old lamp under his arm always ready to be rubbed, while outside his window Jack's beanstalk went clambering heavenward a foot every five minutes.

All the same, it gives one a heartache—even those

of us who knew him least—to think that no more of these wide sheets close written and many times folded will ever come to us through the post. And what the want must be to those who knew him longer and better, to Mr. Colvin, Mr. Gosse, Mr. Henley, only they know.

For myself, I am grateful for every word set down here. It is all sweet, and true, and gracious. The heaven seems kinder to the earth while we read, and in the new portrait Tusitala's large dark eyes gleam at us from beneath the penthouse of his brows with a gipsy-like and transitory suggestion.

“The Sprite” some one called him. And it was a true word. For here he had no continuing city. Doubtless, though, he lightens some Farther Lands with his bright wit, and such ministering spirits as he may cross on his journeying are finding him good company. *Talofa, Tusitala*; do not go very far away! We too would follow you down the “Road of Loving Hearts.”

S. R. CROCKETT.

THE PENTLAND RISING

A PAGE OF HISTORY

1666

A clond of witnesses ly here,
Who for Christ's interest did appear.'

Inscription on Battle-field at Rullion Green.

EDINBURGH
ANDREW ELLIOT, 17 PRINCES STREET

1866

A STEVENSON SHRINE

By Emily Soldene

In 1896 I strolled down Market Street, San Francisco, looking into the curio- and other shops under the Palace Hotel, when my attention was attracted by a crowd of people round one particular shop-window. Now, a crowd in San Francisco (except on political occasions) is an uncommon sight. Naturally, with the curiosity of my sex and the perseverance of the Anglo-Saxon, I took my place in the surging mass and patiently waited till the course of events, and the shoulders of my surroundings, brought me up close to the point of vantage. What came they out for to see? It was a bookseller's window. In the window was a shrine. "The Works and Portraits of Robert Louis Stevenson," proclaimed a placard all illuminated and embossed with red and purple and green and gold. In the centre of the display was an odd-looking document. This, then, was the loadstone—

a letter of Stevenson's, in Stevenson's own handwriting. Many people stood and read, then turned away, sad and sorrowful-looking. "Poor fellow!" said one woman. "But he's all right now. I guess he's got more than he asked for." I stood, too, and read. Before I had finished, my eyes, unknowingly, were full of tears. This is the document. When you have read, you will not wonder at the tears.

"I think now, this 5th or 6th of April, 1873, that I can see my future life. I think it will run stiller and stiller year by year, a very quiet, desultorily studious existence. If God only gives me tolerable health, I think now I shall be very happy: work and science calm the mind, and stop gnawing in the brain; and as I am glad to say that I do now recognise that I shall never be a great man, I may set myself peacefully on a smaller journey, not without hope of coming to the inn before nightfall.

O dass mein leben

Nach diesem ziel ein ewig wandeln sey!"

I walked on a block or so, and, after a few minutes, when I thought my voice was steady and under control, turned back, went into the book-store, and asked the young man in attendance, "Could I be allowed to take a copy of the letter in the window?" He told me it was not, as I thought, an original document, but the printed reproduction of a memorandum found among the dead Stevenson's papers. "Then," said I, "can I not have one—can I not buy one?" And the young man shook his head. "No; they are not for sale." "Oh, I am sorry!" said I. "I would have given anything for one." "Well," said he, in a grave voice, and with a grave smile, "they are not, indeed, for sale; but have been printed for a particular purpose, and one will be *given* to all lovers of Stevenson." He spoke in such a low, reverent, sympathetic tone that I *knew his* eyes must be full, and so I would not look.

Next day I went to see *Mr. Doxey* himself, who is a Stevenson enthusiast, and has one window (the

window of the crowd) devoted entirely to Stevenson. All his works, all his editions—including the Edinburgh Edition—are there; and he, with the greatest kindness, showed me the treasures he had collected. In the first place, the number of portraits was astonishing. Years and conditions and circumstances, all various and changing; but the face—the face always the same. The eyes, wonderful in their keenness, their interrogative, questioning, eager gaze; the looking out, always looking out, always asking, looking ahead, far away into some distant land not given to *les autres* to perceive. That wonderful looking out was the first thing that impressed me when I met Mr. Stevenson in Sydney in '93. Unfortunately for us, he only stayed there a short time, would not visit, was very difficult of access, not at all well, and when he went seemed to disappear, not go. Mr. Doxey had pictures of him in every possible phase—in turn-down collar, in no collar at all; his hair long, short, and middling; in oils, in water-colour, in photos, in a smoking-cap and Impe-

rial ; with a moustache, without a moustache ; young, youthful, dashing, Byronic ; not so youthful, middle-aged ; looking in *this* like a modern Manfred ; in *that* like an epitome of the fashions, wearing a debonair demeanour and a *degage* tie ; as a boy, as a barrister ; on horseback, in a boat. There was a portrait taken by Mrs. Stevenson in 1885, and one lent by Virgil Williams ; another, a water-colour, lent by Miss O'Hara ; and a wonderful study of his wonderful hands. Then he was photographed in his home at Samoa, surrounded by his friends and his faithful, devoted band of young men, his Samoan followers ; in the royal boat-house at Honolulu, seated side by side with his Majesty King Kalakaua ; on board the *Casco*. Here, evidently anxious for a really good picture, he has taken off his hat, standing in the sun bareheaded. At a native banquet, surrounded by all the delicacies of the season, bowls of *kava*, *poi*, *palo-sami*, and much good company. Then the later ones at Vailima ; in the clearing close to his house, in the verandah. Later

still, writing in his bed. Coming to the "inn" he talks about in 1873—coming so close, close, unexpectedly, but not unprepared—Robert Louis Stevenson has passed the veil. Not dead, but gone before, he lives in the hearts of all people. But not so palpably, so outwardly, so proudly, as in the hearts of these people of the Sunny Land, who, standing on the extreme verge of the Western world, shading their eyes from the shining glory, watch the sunshine go out through the Golden Gate, out on its way across the pearly Pacific to the lonely Mountain of Samoa where lies the body of the man "Tusitala," whose songs and lessons and stories fill the earth, and the souls of the people thereof.

On the fly-leaf of the copy of "The Silverado Squatters," sent to "Virgil Williams and Dora Norton Williams," to whom it was dedicated, is the following poem in the handwriting of the author, written at Hyeres, where, as he says in his diary, he spent the happiest days of his life—

Here, from the forelands of the tideless sea,
Behold and take my offering unadorned.
In the Pacific air it sprang ; it grew
Among the silence of the Alpine air ;
In Scottish heather blossomed ; and at last,
By that unshapen sapphire, in whose face
Spain, Italy, France, Algiers, and Tunis view
Their introverted mountains, came to fruit.
Back now, my booklet, on the diving ship,
And posting on the rails to home, return
Home, and the friends whose honouring name you bear.

—*The Sketch*, Feb. 26, 1896

STEVENSON AND HAZLITT

Of the many books which Robert Louis Stevenson planned and discussed with his friends in his correspondence there is none, perhaps, which would have been more valued than the biography of William Hazlitt. Whenever Stevenson refers to Hazlitt, whether in his essay on "Walking Tours" or in his

letters, he makes one wish he would say more. This is what he writes to Mr. Hammerton :

"I am in treaty with Bentley for a Life of Hazlitt; I hope it will not fall through as I love the subject, and appear to have found a publisher who loves it also. That, I think, makes things more pleasant. You know I am a fervent Hazlittite; I mean regarding him as the English writer who has had the scantiest justice. Besides which, I am anxious to write biography; really, if I understand myself in quest of profit, I think it must be good to live with another man from birth to death. You have tried it, and know."

If the qualification of a biographer is to understand his subject, Stevenson may be said to have been well qualified to write on Hazlitt. Mr. Leslie Stephen has given us a fine critical estimate of Hazlitt the writer, and the late Mr. Ireland's prefatory memoir to his admirable selection from the Essays, with its enforced limitations, is an excellent piece of biographical con-

densation, but the life of the essayist has yet to be written. The subject has been tried by many others, but no one has quite captured the spirit of Hazlitt. Had the details of Hazlitt's life, with his passionate hates and loves, been told by himself in the manner of his beloved Rousseau, he might have produced a book which for interest would have rivalled the *Confessions*, but failing such a work one must deplore that Stevenson was not encouraged to write on the subject.

I. R., in *London Academy*.

ON BERANGER

From the article by Robert Louis Stevenson in the Encyclopædia Britannica.

.... He worked deliberately, never wrote more than fifteen songs a year and often less, and was so fastidious that he has not preserved a quarter of what he finished. "I am a good little bit of a poet," he says himself, "clever in the craft, and a conscientious worker, to whom old airs and a modest choice of subjects (*le coin ou je me*

suis confine), have brought some success." Nevertheless, he makes a figure of importance in literary history. When he first began to cultivate the *chanson*, this minor form lay under some contempt, and was restricted to slight subjects and a humorous guise of treatment. Gradually he filled these little chiseled toys of verbal perfection with ever more and more sentiment. From a date comparatively early he had determined to sing for the people. It was for this reason that he fled, as far as possible, the houses of his influential friends, and came back gladly to the garret and the street corner. Thus it was, also, that he came to acknowledge obligations to Emile Debraux, who had often stood between him and the masses as interpreter, and given him the key-note of the popular humour. Now, he had observed in the songs of sailors, and all who labour, a prevailing tone of sadness; and so, as he grew more masterful in this sort of expression, he sought more and more after what is deep, serious, and constant in the thoughts of common men. The evolu-

tion was slow ; and we can see in his own works examples of every stage, from that of witty indifference in fifty pieces of the first collection, to that of grave and even tragic feeling in *Les Souvenirs du Peuple* or *Le Vieux Vagabond*. And this innovation involved another, which was as a sort of prelude to the great romantic movement. For the *chanson*, as he says himself, opened up to him a path in which his genius could develop itself at ease ; he escaped, by this literary postern, from strict academical requirements, and had at his disposal the whole dictionary, four-fifths of which, according to La Harpe, were forbidden to the use of more regular and pretentious poetry. If he still kept some of the old vocabulary, some of the old imagery, he was yet accustoming people to hear moving subjects treated in a manner more free and simple than heretofore ; so that his was a sort of conservative reform, preceding the violent revolution of Victor Hugo and his army of uncompromising romantics. He seems himself to have had glimmerings of some such idea ;

but he withheld his full approval from the new movement on two grounds :—first, because the romantic school misused somewhat brutally the delicate organism of the French language ; and second, as he wrote to Sainte-Beuve in 1832, because they adopted the motto of “ Art for art,” and set no object of public usefulness before them as they wrote. For himself (and this is the third point of importance) he had a strong sense of political responsibility. Public interest took a far higher place in his estimation than any private passion or favour. He had little toleration for those erotic poets who sing their own loves and not the common sorrows of mankind, “ who forget,” to quote his own words, “ forget beside their mistress those who labour before the Lord.”

STEVENSON OF THE LETTERS.

Long, hatchet face, black hair, and haunting gaze,
That follows, as you move about the room,
Ah, this is he who trod the darkening ways,
And plucked the flowers upon the edge of doom.

The bright, sweet-scented flowers that star the road
To death's dim dwelling, others heed them not,
With sad eyes fixed upon that drear abode,
Weeping, and wailing their unhappy lot.

But he went laughing down the shadowed way,
The boy's heart leaping still within his breast,
Weaving his garlands when his mood was gay,
Mocking his sorrows with a solemn jest.

The high Gods gave him wine to drink ; a cup
Of strong desire, of knowledge, and of pain,
He set it to his lips and drank it up,
Then smiling, turned unto his flowers again.

These are the flowers of that immortal strain,
Which, when the hand that plucked them drops and
Still keep their radiant beauty free from stain, [dies,
And breathe their fragrance through the centuries.

B. PAUL NEWMAN.

APROPOS VAILIMA LETTERS.

The account of an interview with Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson, published in a San Francisco paper, is somewhat distressing reading. It raises over again the old question of the prudence of publishing a dead man's letters, when his widow is still alive, without her sanction. Mrs. Stevenson says that her late husband's friends—if such she still holds them to be—have hastened to make money out of the scraps and scrawls he sent them. The charge reads as an ugly one. But a moment's reflection supplies its modifications. Has Mr. Henley rushed into the market-place with his dead friend's letters? Has Mr. Charles Baxter? That was the old trio renowned in song and famous in fable. Of the newer friends—friends such as those he made in Bournemouth, Lady Shelley and the Misses Ashworth Taylor, the most attached a man ever had—not one has brought out of his or her treasury the delightful letters of “R. L. S.” We have the Vailima

Letters, it is true, but surely these must be published by the consent of Mrs. Stevenson and at her profit? We had also that letter which Mr. Gosse sent to the *Times*. And, as for that, it was, obviously given and not "sold"? In this particular letter, which was written in acknowledgment of a dedication of Mr. Gosse's poems to him, Stevenson congratulated his correspondent on the prospect of an old age mitigated by the society of his descendants. To heighten the picture, the man who had learned his craft so well, and could hardly elude it in his least-considered letters, introduced his own figure as a sort of foil—he was childless. That word, uttered with regret, has, perhaps, a pang which the heart of a widow might imagine she should be spared. Again, in one of the Vailima Letters, Stevenson refers to his having been happy only once in his life, and that, too, on the chance of its misinterpretation, may be ashes in Mrs. Stevenson's mouth. Yet who does not know "R. L. S." as a man of moods? He is that, and nothing else, in some of

his letters. And no chance phrase of his will ever be read to the discredit of Mrs. Stevenson—she may take the English reader's oath on that.

In one of his Vailima Letters Stevenson speaks of the "incredible" pains he has given to the first chapter of "Weir of Hermiston." Yet, after that even he remodelled it. It was worth the trouble, and the other seven and a bit are worthy of it. The very title was a serious trouble to him. "Braxfield" he would have liked it to be, but the judge of that name was not treated with enough historical care to warrant the adoption of it. Another name, "The Hanging Judge," he abandoned; also "The Lord Justice Clerk," also "The Two Kirsties of Cauldstaneship," and "The Four Black Brothers." No doubt in choosing "Weir of Hermiston"—with some of the sound-romance of Dobell's "Keiths of Revelston" about it—he chose finally for the best.—*The Sketch.*

NOTICE

OF A

NEW FORM OF INTERMITTENT LIGHT FOR LIGHTHOUSES.

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

*From the Transactions of the Royal Scottish Society of Arts,
Vol. VIII., 1870-71*

EDINBURGH
PRINTED BY NEILL AND COMPANY

1871

A VISIT TO STEVENSON'S PACIFIC ISLE

It is a curious fact that Stevenson, whom we all regarded at home as being the personification of Samoa—indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that the average Englishman's idea of Samoa was “some island or other in the Pacific where Stevenson lives,”—has left very little behind him in the way of tradition or story in the island he loved so well. He lived in the midst of a society which, outside his immediate family surroundings, must have been eminently uncongenial to a man of his refined nature, yet he damaged his fame here, at least, by meddling in the petty squabbles which agitate the beach at Apia, and his “Footnote to History” has made him a host of enemies, notably among the German colony, who, by the mouth of one of their many prophets, condemned him to me as a writer of “stupid stinks!” And therefore he may have made a mistake in imagining himself a factor in the insoluble equation of Samoan affairs. It is to the

natives that he was more attached than to the vague ideals which form their so-called political future. To them he was a great chief, "Tusitala Talmita" by name, and many a native I have spoken to mentioned him with real affection as a good friend and a man with a golden heart. Perhaps this is the praise he himself would have chosen rather than that of the white colony.

It is not my purpose, however, to dilate on his life in Samoa, nor indeed would it be possible to gather, from the mass of conflicting evidence, any rational account of his doings in his island home. It is of a pilgrimage which I made to visit his library that I would give some short account. The room was walled from floor to ceiling with books, and I began to inspect them. To the left of the door were some "yellow backs," but few, nor did I see in his library much trash of any description. Next came books of travel in almost every country in the world, the bulk of them, however, dealing with the Pacific. From Capt. Cook down, it would be hard to name a Pacific travel book

that has not found itself on the shelves at Vailima. Next, I am bound to say, came my first disappointment. I had always thought that Stevenson must have been a good classical scholar, and had an idea formed, I know not how or whence, that a great style—and surely his may be justly called so—necessitated a close and intimate acquaintance with those classical authors who—

“ Upon the stretched forefinger of all Time
Sparkle forever.”

Yet I found classics, indeed, but, alas ! in Mr. Bohn's edition, while on the shelf beneath lay the originals uncut. It came to me as a positive blow to find the pages of the “Odyssey” uncared for and unread, save in some translation. Of Horace he had many and good editions, and they seemed read and used ; but of the Greek tragedians I found only “Sophocles” in Prof. Campbell's translation, and no edition of his plays save a small “Ædipus the King.” This was a great shock to me, for even supposing that Steven-

son was only "a maker of phrases" (as many people will tell you, above all here, "for a prophet is not without honor," etc.), still phrases must have some basis in education, and a man who is evidently careless of his masters of ancient language is not likely to prove a brilliant coiner of words.

Turning with regret from this shelf, I came next upon a fine collection of French works, beginning with a complete edition of Balzac, which had evidently been read with care. Much French fiction was here—Daudet's "Tartarin," "Fromont Jeune et Risler Aine," "Les Rois en Exil," Guy de Maupassant, Prosper Merimee and a complete Victor Hugo, besides a swarm of the more ephemeral novels. Here, too, was a fine and complete edition of "Wellington's Dispatches" and several military treatises. Next to these came a good collection (be it always remembered that I speak of Samoa in Samoa, and 14,000 miles from the home of English and French publishing and printing) of historical works; Gibbon, of course, Milman,

Von Ranke and many of the old French chroniclers—Philippe de Comines especially—read and marked, no doubt, when Stevenson was writing “The Black Arrow.” One passage so marked struck me as curious. Surely Stevenson was a man whom, from his writings, one would imagine to be practically without enemies; yet, in the light of events at Apia, and from what I have heard here, the quotation seems apposite; “Je scay bien que ma lange m’a porte grande hommage, aussi m’a-t-elle fait quelques fois de plaisir beaucoup, toutesfois c’est raison que je repare l’amende.” Now these are almost the exact words which conclude the preface to the only deplorable book Stevenson ever wrote—his “Footnote to History,” which has made him many enemies, and, I think, no friends—in fact, nothing but the vigorous description of the hurricane saves it from worthlessness. As history it is not trustworthy, and as a footnote it was ridiculous. However, to return to the books. There was a very complete collection of modern poets, hardly any of note being

omitted. I even saw a copy of "J. K. S.'s" "Lapsus Calami," which surprised me, for Stevenson was neither a Cambridge nor a public school man.

Such, then, in brief, is a rough summary of the library of this remarkable man; many of the editions de luxe were packed away, but I believe what I saw was his working stock. We now opened a little glass door leading from the room into Stevenson's sanctum, where he dictated almost all his work. It was quite a small room, lighted by two windows; and in one corner lay a bed with a mat "Samoan fashion" spread thereon, while beside it was a table with a bunch of withered flowers (the last he ever looked on), and which Mr. Chatfield has very properly never permitted to be removed. Here, in one corner, stood a small bookcase with editions of his own works; the walls were hung with engravings of ancestors—the only sign of his Scotch origin I noted in the house—while above the chimney-piece (the only chimney-pieces and fire-places in Samoa are at Vailima), were a lovely series of

drawings of Gordon Browne, to illustrate one of his later books, "The Island Nights' Adventures." These pictures, though only in black and white, breathe the spirit of the islands in a marvellous manner, especially remarkable being the illustration, "The Beach of Falesa." In a small bookcase over the head of the bed were some of his own books, a Shakespeare, and, what was more curious, "A Record of Remarkable Crimes and Criminals." I heard that Stevenson was fond of "supping full of horrors," and that would, of course, account for the inevitable murder or bloodshed which haunts his books; he was an avid reader of murders and crimes of all sorts. His mind was of a curious cast. Mr. Chatfield told me that on some days he was the most charming of companions—brilliant, witty and fascinating; on others, dull and morose beyond description, hardly uttering a word, and giving no sign of the wealth of tenderness and genial kindness that lurked within. As a host, it is agreed on all hands he was incomparable. His entertainment ca-

tered for the tastes of all, and in the sunshine of his delightful company all sorts and conditions of men were happy.

We left this room with a feeling of depression, and passing through the other to the door, my eye fell on what I had not before noticed, the original of the delightful map which is the frontispiece to *Treasure Island*—a most beautiful piece of drawing, reminding me, in its quaint accompaniments of spouting dolphins and horn-blowing Tritons, as much as in its pretended accuracy, of those strange maps in the earlier editions of *Gulliver*, where *Brobdingnag*, *Laputa*, etc., are all laid out with geographical detail of latitude and longitude. The curious, sprawling writing of *Flint* and *Billy Bones* were in contrast to the fine workmanship of the rest of the map, which, save for some slight coarseness in the shading of the steeper side of "*Spyglass Hill*," might have been engraved. The last thing I saw in the library was perhaps the most curious of all. It was a navigating chart constructed by the

natives of the Wallis Islands for their own use and guidance. I have since learned that such charts are used by the traders also who navigate these latitudes. The form of the charts is a parallelogram constructed on a framework of cane or other light wood. Across this parallelogram run vertically convex pieces of wood bent to show the general run or set of the wind and waves; cross currents are marked with cross pieces of wood showing their direction, and their force and variation are indicated on the slips of wood themselves (which are not half an inch wide) by means of signs and curious marks. Islands are denoted on this wonderful piece of native work by cowrie shells fastened to the framework. I suppose Stevenson must have picked this up on his travels among the islands, and I believe that although these charts are universally used in the Wallis group and are found perfectly correct, very few specimens of the kind have emerged as yet from those islands. I puzzled a long time to guess what it was, Mrs. Chatfield enjoying my mystification,

which she herself had experienced when she first saw this remarkable map. One more fact I must mention about the library. In a corner I found a number of quarto volumes, well bound, containing apparently a continuous day-book of some of Stevenson's many voyages. It is to be hoped that these journals may some day be given to the world. Many and curious were the scenes he witnessed ; various and entertaining the personages he must have met on his travels. He seems to have visited most of the many groups of islets with which the Pacific is so plentifully sprinkled.

I did not care to visit the rest of the house, though my hostess most kindly offered to show me anything she could, but I stood outside and looked at the lofty hill over the house where he sleeps his last sleep in the land and among the people he loved so well. Samoans show much poetic feeling in selecting beautiful sites for the graves of their chiefs. In my journeys round the island, in the most remote districts, I was frequently delighted by coming suddenly upon the usual inclos-

ure of rough stones which mark the resting-place of a chief, always in a beautiful spot and invariably commanding a wide and splendid view. This may also have been Stevenson's object in selecting the summit of the hill for his grave. The labor required to carry him to his last resting-place was immense, as many as sixty Samoans being employed, while only nineteen Europeans braved the difficulties of the ascent to be present at the sad offices. But his last home is beautiful; by day the trees innumerable round his lonely grave are musical with the fanfare of the glorious trade-winds, while at times the sound of

“The league-long roller thundering on the reef.”

is borne across the waving forest. The view by day is superb; mountain, valley, reef and palm, with the gleam of the sunlight on the breaking surf around the distant reef, while overhead the solitary tropic bird wings its silent flight through the dazzling azure of the skies. No more beautiful spot for a grave can be

imagined ; the majestic voice of those southern seas he loved so well makes melody in the very air around his grave. No spot more typical of the Pacific could have been found ; and I turned away with a feeling of relief that one whose nature was so allied to that he wrote of should in his death not have been divided from the scenes he made familiar to so many thousands of admirers.

A PEN PORTRAIT

Robert Louis Stevenson, the author, really does look like the watermelon portrait of him in one of the magazines. He sat in a Long Branch car on Tuesday on his way from Manasquan to New York.

He has a long, narrow face, and wears his long brown hair parted in the middle and combed back. It is just such straight, coarse hair as General Roger A. Pryor's, but much lighter in color. Stevenson sat in a forward corner of the car, with his hat off, and the cape of his coat up behind his head like a monk's

cowl. His black velvet coat and vest showed plainly, and over his legs he wore a black and white checked shawl. His Byronic collar was soft and untidy, and his shirt was unlaundered, but his clothes were scrupulously clean. On the long, thin, white fingers of his left hand he wore two rings, and he kept these fingers busy constantly pulling his drooping moustache. His face is slightly freckled and a little hollow at the cheek, but it has a good bit of Scotch color in it.

Mr. Stevenson presented such an odd figure that all in the car stared at him, particularly when a rumor of who he was ran among the people. But he seemed unconscious of the interest he aroused. He was reading a book, and every now and then he would fix a sentence in his mind, close the book on one finger, look at the ceiling and muse. When a sentence pleased him, he smiled at it, and then read it again. At the Jersey City depot he threw off his shawl and stood up, and then the figure he cut was extraordinary, for his coat proved to be merely a large cape, with

a small one above it, and under both came his extra long legs, or, rather, his long lavender trousers, for they appeared to have no legs within them.

Mrs. Stevenson was with him, but sat apart studying the scenery. Her husband looked at her frequently with a whimsical smile, and found great fun in laughing at her behind his book when a dude of tremendous style took the seat beside her.—*The Sun*, 1887.

APPRECIATION AND HOMAGE.

“The precious memory of a single afternoon at the Saville Club. . . . We chiefly talked of the craft and the art of story-telling and of its technique. . . . Stevenson praised heartily Mark Twain’s ‘Huckleberry Finn,’ and it was his belief that it was greater, riper, and richer than its forerunner, ‘Tom Sawyer.’”

. . . . “He was a writer of travel sketches and was able to describe Edinburgh with the same freedom from the commonplace that gave freshness to ‘Silverado Squatters’. . . . He was also a biographer and a

literary critic. . . . but as a story-teller he won his widest triumphs."

Brander Matthews.

"No other writer of our time has come as near as Stevenson to the conquest of a perfect English style. He is the one who stands first with the true lovers of the art of words. To quote from himself he is the one who is most unceasingly inspired by '*an unextinguishable zest in technical successes*' and has also most constantly remembered that '*The end of all art is to please.*'"

M. G. Van Rensselaer.

"In the years I knew him, if Stevenson expressed much interest in children, it was mainly for the sake of their fathers and mothers: but that after a while he began to take a very great delight in summoning back to his clear recollection the panic fears and adventurous pleasure of his own early youth, thus becoming, in his portraiture of himself, the consummate painter of one

species of child. But his relation to other children was shy and gently defiant; it would have exhausted him to play with them; but he looked forward to a time when they should be old enough to talk to him."

Edmund Gosse.

R. L. S. AND MUSIC.

Mr. Andrew Lang recently declared that most poets and literary men hate music. They hate it because it thrusts itself upon them when they don't want it—the poet when his eye is in a fine frenzy rolling, and the prosaic literary man when he is debating about the opening sentence of an important article. You need not look at pictures or statues, Mr. Lang contends; you need not even read poetry, if you “hate poetry and painting,” like George II. But you must often listen to music whether you will or not. There is no escape from it any more than from the influenza. Mr. Lang no doubt speaks chiefly for himself. Nature, as he frankly admits, has not made him musical; and though he can stand “Will ye no come back again?” and “Bonnie Dundee,” Wagner and Chopin say absolutely nothing to him. In any case, he is somewhat astray in declaring that literary men dislike music. Even Johnson, who is generally quoted

as among the music-haters, and who, as we all know, called music "the least disagreeable of noises," even he was at the worst only insensible to the charms of the art. He once bought a flageolet—that he never made out a tune is no matter—and Burney, the musical historian, says that six months before his death he asked to be taught "at least the alphabet of your language." Scott, too, though the incurable defects of his voice and ear drove his music teacher to despair, was very partial to the national music of his country, and, like Congreve's Jeremy, had a "reasonable ear" for a jig. Nay, Lamb himself, whose lack of musical ear has been boldly proclaimed in one of the best of the Elia essays, used to go to Vincent Novello's house for no other purpose than to hear Novello play the organ and listen to his daughter's singing. These may, indeed, be taken as types of the indifferent men, the men who do not care very much whether they ever hear music or not. But look at the number of authors who have explicitly declared their delight in music. De Quincey

was one ; Browning was another. Did not Goldsmith play the flute, and Milton amuse himself with the organ ? Rogers loved a barrel organ to distraction, and Ruskin went into mild raptures over Halle's playing of Thalberg's " Home, sweet home." Burns and Hogg scraped on the fiddle, and Shelley strummed on a guitar, now on the Bodleian at Oxford. Moore sang Irish songs, Tom Campbell once tipped a German organist to play for half an hour to him ; and if Shakespeare wasn't musical he ought to have been considering the way in which he has spoken of the man who " hath no music in his soul." In short, in regard to music, our great writers have been just like other people—some have been passionately fond of music, some have liked it in a mild kind of way, and some have been absolutely indifferent to it.

To which of the two first-mentioned classes our brave Stevenson belonged it would be somewhat difficult to say. That he was musical at all will probably be regarded as a revelation to most people ; and in-

deed it is only since the recent publication of his correspondence that even the elect have realized the full extent of his musical tastes and accomplishments. That he took at least a mild interest in music might have been inferred from various allusions to the art in his tales and essays. In "The Wrong Box," for example, we have the humorous situation where the young barrister pretends that he is engaged on the composition of an imaginary comic opera. It is in the same story, again, that there occurs a veritable "locus classicus" on the art of playing the penny whistle, and the difference between the amateur and the professional performer. Stevenson, as we shall see, was himself devoted to the penny whistle, and in view of that devotion it is curious to remark the observation in this story that one seldom, if ever, encounters a person learning to play that instrument. "The young of the penny whistler," as he puts it, "like those of the salmon, are occult from observation." He endows David, his forbear at Pilrig, with a musical ear, for the

Laird received David Balfour "in the midst of learned works and musical instruments, for he was not only a deep philosopher, but much of a musician."

It is, however, needless to dwell upon these vague impersonal references to music when so much that is directly explicit on the subject is to be found both in the Vailima letters and in the latter correspondence. Miss Blantyre Simpson, who knew Stevenson in his early days, says that he had not much of a musical ear, and had only a "rudimentary acquaintance" with "Auld Lang Syne" and "The Wearing of the Green." It is clear that he improved as the years went on, but his family seem always to have regarded his musical accomplishments with something like scorn. In 1874, when he was 24, he was at Chester with his father, and the verger was taking the visitors round the cathedral.

"We got into a little side chapel, whence we could hear the choir children at practice, and I stopped a moment listening to them with, I dare-say, a very bright face, for the sound was delight-

ful to me. 'Ah,' says he (the verger), 'You're very fond of music.' I said I was. 'Yes, I could tell that by your head,' he answered. Then my father cut in brutally, said anyway I had no ear, and left the verger so distressed and shaken in the foundation of his creed that, I hear, he got my father aside afterwards and said he was sure there was something in my face, and wanted to know what it was if not music."

The elder Stevenson very likely failed to distinguish between the love of music and the possession of an ear for music. The two things are totally different, as Coleridge once pointed out in regard to his own particular case. "I have," he said, "no ear whatever. I could not sing an air to save my life, but I have the intensest delight in music, and can detect good from bad." Stevenson probably had no such gift of discrimination, but that he had at least the faculty of musical appreciativeness seems perfectly clear. He mentions it as one of his characteristic failings that he

never could remember the name of an air, no matter how familiar it was to him ; but he was able to say of some engrossing pursuit that it "fascinates me like a tune." Wealth, he remarked once, evidently in all seriousness, is "useful for only two things—a yacht and a string quartette." In his younger days he seems to have been as much devoted to the opera as ever De Quincey was. At Frankfort, in 1872, he reports that he goes to the theatre every night, except when there is no opera. One night he was "terribly excited" over Halévy's "La Juive," so much so indeed that he had to "slope" in the middle of the fifth act. It was raining and cold outside, so he went into a "bierhalle" and brooded for nearly an hour over his glass. "An opera," he mused, "is far more real than real life to me. It seems as if stage illusion, and particularly this hardest to swallow and most conventional illusion of them all—an opera—would never stale upon me. I wish that life was an opera. I should like to live in one ; but I don't know in what quarter of the globe

I shall find a society so constituted. Besides, it would soon pall—imagine asking for three-kreuzer cigars in recitative, or giving the washerwoman the inventory of your dirty clothes in a sustained and flourishes aria !” Here, as some one has remarked, we see the wide-eyed innocence of the man—the tinsel and the humbug so apparent, and yet the vague longing so real.

That Stevenson should make attempts to play the piano was only natural, but in that accomplishment he does not seem to have proceeded very far. When he was at Bournemouth in 1886, he tells Mrs. Fleeming Jenkin that “ I write all the morning, come down, and never leave the piano till five ; write letters, dine, get down again about eight, and never leave the piano until I go to bed.” At this time the whistle was Osborne’s instrument. “ You should hear Lloyd on the penny whistle and me on the piano !” Stevenson exclaimed to his father, “ Dear powers, what a concerto ! I now live entirely for the piano ; he for the whistle ;

the neighbors in a radius of a furlong and a half are packing up in quest of better climes." By his own confession, it was a case of picking out the melody with one finger! In the matter of musical arrangements he proclaims himself a purist, and yet, with charming inconsistency, announces that he is arranging certain numbers of the "Magic Flute" for "two melodious forefingers." Clearly, it does not say much for Mr. Henley's powers as a virtuoso that Stevenson should have "counterfeited his playing on the piano."

But Stevenson's particular instrument was the flageolet, the same that Johnson once bought. Miss Simpson says that his flageolet-playing was merely one of his impulsive whims, an experiment undertaken to see if he liked making music. However this may have been, there can be no doubt about his assiduity in practice; indeed, the earlier Vailima letters are full of references which show his devotion to the now somewhat despised instrument. "Played on my pipe," "took to tootling on the flageolet," are entries which

constantly occur, the context always making it clear that "pipe" is synonymous with flageolet. "If I take to my pipe," he writes on one occasion, "I know myself all is over for the morning." Writing to Mr. Colvin in June, 1891, he says:—"Tell Mrs. S. I have been playing 'Le Chant d'Amour' lately, and have arranged it, after awful trouble, rather prettily for two pipes; and it brought her before me with an effect scarce short of hallucination. I could hear her voice in every note; yet I had forgot the air entirely, and began to pipe it from notes as something new, when I was brought up with a round turn by this reminiscence." Generally speaking, Stevenson "tootled" by himself; but now and again he took part in concerted music with Osborne and Mrs. Strong. One day he makes music "furiously" with these two. A day or two later he writes:—"Woke at the usual time, very little work, for I was tired, and had a job for the evening—to write parts for a new instrument, a violin. Lunch, chat, and up to my place to practise; but there

was no practising for me—my flageolet was gone wrong, and I had to take it all to pieces, clean it, and put it up again. As this is a most intricate job—the thing dissolves into seventeen separate members; most of these have to be fitted on their individual springs as fine as needles, and sometimes two at once with the springs shoving different ways—it took me till two.” However, he got over his difficulty, and was ready for the performance. “In the evening our violinist arrived, no great virtuoso truly, but plucky, industrious, and a good reader; and we played five pieces with huge amusement, and broke up at nine.” It goes without saying that, notwithstanding all this practice, Stevenson was exceedingly modest about his accomplishments. “Even my clumsinesses are my joy,” he said—“my woodcuts, my stumbling on the pipe.”

But we must not forget the penny whistle. That instrument seems to have at one time quite ousted the flageolet. “I am a great performer before the Lord

on the penny whistle," he writes to Miss Boodle from Saranac in 1888. "We now perform duets on two D tin whistles; it is no joke to make the bass; I think I must really send you one, which I wish you would correct. I may be said to live for these instrumental labors now; but I have always some childishness on hand." To play a bass of any kind on a tin whistle must indeed have been "no joke." But the instrument appears to have had quite a fascination for Stevenson at this time. He even proposed to associate it with the title of what he ultimately called "A Child's Garden of Verses." When he sent the manuscript for publication he could not decide about the title, but after some banter on the subject he tentatively fixed on "The Penny Whistle: Nursery Verses, &c." Then he thought of a variation—"Penny Whistles for Small Whistlers," and directed that the title-page should be embellished with crossed penny whistles, or "a sheaf of 'em."

But Stevenson was more than a player of music:

he actually tried his hand at composition! In one letter of the year 1886 he sets down in musical notation from memory a part of a dance air of Lully's. About the harmony, which he has evidently made himself, he talks quite learnedly. "Where I have put an A," he says, "is that a dominant eleventh or what? or just a seventh on the D? and if the latter, is that allowed? It sounds very funny. Never mind all my questions; if I begin about music (which is my leading ignorance and curiosity) I have always to babble questions; all my friends know me now, and take no notice whatever." A few months later and he had composed his Opus 1. He called it a Threnody, and he sent it for criticism to his cousin, Mr. R. A. M. Stevenson, who was better versed in the art. Some plain talk on the part of the cousin apparently followed, for we find the composer urging certain points in self-justification. "There may be hidden fifths in it," he says, "and if there are it shows how damn spontaneous the thing was. I could tinker and tic-tac-toe

on a piece of paper, but scorned the act with a Threnody which was poured forth like blood and water on the groaning organ." There was the true composer, putting down his inspiration as it came to him, and allowing it to stand as it was in defiance of all rule! Nothing daunted, he made another attempt. "Here-with another shy," he said, "more melancholy than before, but I think not so abjectly idiotic. The musical terms seem to be as good as in Beethoven, and that, after all, is the great affair. Bar the damn bareness of the base, it looks like a real piece of music from a distance. I am proud to say it was not made one hand at a time. The base was of synchronous birth with the treble; they are of the same age, and may God have mercy on their souls." That is too characteristically charming to be spoiled by comment.

J. C. H.

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